

PRO/CON: Should we celebrate Christopher Columbus?

By Silvio Laccetti, McClatchy Tribune, and Los Angeles Times Editorial Board, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.06.17

Word Count **493**

Level **610L**



A statue of Christopher Columbus stands in Providence, Rhode Island. Photo by: Kenneth C. Zirkel/Wikimedia Commons

PRO: History shows that Columbus is worth celebrating

Statues honoring Christopher Columbus are being damaged and destroyed. Columbus was the first person to sail from Europe to America. He reached America in 1492.

Celebrating Columbus Day has become a problem for some. People are angry Columbus is celebrated. Learning more about Columbus shows this anger is unfair.

Some people say Columbus caused the spread of a deadly illness called smallpox. Smallpox killed many Native Americans. Native Americans are the people who lived in America before Columbus arrived.

Columbus Is Not Totally To Blame

Saying Columbus caused all the deaths is unfair. The deaths did not happen right after he arrived. The deaths happened over many years. Also, we do not know the exact number of Native American deaths. The counts are not exact.

Next, think about the early civilizations of the Americas. These societies mistreated people, too. They also had slaves. War, slavery and human sacrifice happened before Columbus arrived in 1492. The world has made progress. Still, even today there are wars and acts of violence.

Columbus was a brave explorer. This is why people celebrate Columbus Day. We should learn more about Columbus. We should not destroy or remove his monuments. Columbus must stay part of our history.

Silvio Laccetti is a retired professor of social sciences at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey.

CON: We must recognize that progress for some meant injustice for others

Leaders in Los Angeles, California, have changed Columbus Day. It will now be called Indigenous Peoples Day. The day will celebrate Native Americans. They are the people who lived in America before Columbus arrived.

Leaders also want to make up for years of unfair treatment.

Creating a holiday that gives people a day off is not enough. Ending Columbus Day is also not enough.

The U.S. must learn more about how badly Native Americans have been treated. Many of them were killed. Their villages were destroyed.

Can a holiday help us learn about Native Americans? Can it help us treat them and their history with more respect? Possibly.

Pay For Land Or Return It

Leaders could pay back Native American tribes for land. Or they could return the land.

Many people in the U.S. have been mistreated. This includes Native Americans. The U.S. has also welcomed millions of people from other countries. These people have come in order to live a better life.

It does not matter what the holiday is called. It should celebrate a country that wants people to be treated equally. The day should teach that this equal treatment has not always happened.

We can celebrate that our country began with a promise of liberty and equality. At the same time, we need to realize that progress for some caused injustice for others. Is there a way to do both? There should be.

The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board represents the opinions of the publisher and staff of the newspaper.

Quiz

- 1 According to the PRO article, why is celebrating Columbus Day important?
 - (A) because statues of Columbus are being damaged and destroyed
 - (B) because Columbus was the first brave explorer to sail to America
 - (C) because Columbus caused many Native Americans to get smallpox
 - (D) because even today there are wars and acts of violence in the world

- 2 Why did leaders in Los Angeles create Indigenous Peoples Day?
 - (A) to celebrate the discovery made by Columbus
 - (B) to create a holiday to give people a day off
 - (C) to teach respect for Native American history
 - (D) to pay back Native American tribes for land

- 3 The author of the PRO article says Columbus was not completely to blame for the spread of smallpox.

Which paragraph from the section "Columbus Is Not Totally To Blame" BEST supports this claim?

- 4 According to the author of the CON article, what is one problem with celebrating Columbus Day?
 - (A) It gives most people a day off from work.
 - (B) It ignores unfair treatment of Native Americans.
 - (C) It is confusing for people in Los Angeles.
 - (D) It teaches that people are not treated equally.